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# Movement as the Basic Atmospheric Dimension of Cruising on the High Seas

Anton ESCHER, Marie KARNER, Christina KERZ, Helena RAPP, Elisabeth SOMMERLAD<sup>1</sup>

1. All authors: Institute of Geography, Johannes Gutenberg University  
Mainz, Germany  
Escher@uni-mainz.de  
M.Karner@geo.uni-mainz.de  
C.Kerz@geo.uni-mainz.de  
H.Rapp@geo.uni-mainz.de  
E.Sommerlad@geo.uni-mainz.de

**Abstract.** *The paper identifies ‘the atmospheric grid’ of cruising on the high seas on a theoretical, methodical and empirical level. Embedded in the current academic discourse on atmospheres and ambiances, we developed a theoretical slide that is tailored to the particular characteristics of cruise ships. Practical experiences, empirical analysis and discursive introspection show that ‘the atmospheric grid’ of cruising at high sea should be interpreted as a dynamic ‘atmospheric grid’ that can be fractionated into five dimensions. The focus of this paper is on the dimension of ‘movement’, which we identify as the basic atmospheric dimension of the atmospheric grid.*

**Keywords:** *atmosphere, cruise ship, atmospheric grid, movement*

As never before, pleasure cruises on the high seas are booming. Such cruises constitute a growing tourism market: From family to ultra-luxury, from boutique cruising to tall ship – there is a wide variety for almost every price category, socio-economic group and region in the world (e. g. the Caribbean, the South Seas or the Mediterranean Sea) to choose from. The journey from harbor to harbor and the permanent, repetitive departure from a port can be characterised with the words of Enzensberger (1958) who describes the modern mass tourism as a ‘getting away from it all’. This supposed ‘escape from reality’ and the passengers’ feelings of desire and freedom are influenced and boosted through full-scale marketing and strategic management.

## *Theoretical Framing and Methods*

The paper introduces an atmospheric grid of cruising that exists for every passenger regardless of fantasy, socialisation and subjective feelings. On a theoretical level we distinguish four components of the atmospheric which are traced back to Schmitz’s phenomenology of the lived body (1964, 2003, 2007, 2014), Böhme’s new aesthetics (1993, 2001, 2013) as well as more empirically oriented approaches of Hasse (2002,

2008, 2012, 2014), Kazig (2007, 2008, 2013), and Thibaud (2003, 2010<sup>1</sup>, 2015): atmospheres as framing units, atmospheres as affective-emotional feelings, atmospheres as procedural states and atmospheres as programmatic designs.

The methodological approach is mainly based on ethnographic research as discussed in the context of non-representational-theory and other approaches like the 'parcours commentés' (Thibaud, 2001, Kazig 2008, Hasse, 2002) that have been established as part of empirical research studies on atmospheres and ambiances. Furthermore, we consider Vannini's (2015, 318) five 'qualities of [...] non-representational ethnography: vitality, performativity, corporeality, sensuality and mobility' as important. Our methodological approach also includes practical experiences, empirical analysis and discursive introspection. As the analysis shows, the atmospheric dimension of movement is the key dimension of the atmospheric grid of cruising.

### *The Atmospheric Grid of Cruising on the High Seas*

We define an atmospheric grid as a place-based and dynamic, net-like entity that is designed and shaped by different atmospheric dimensions and that influences a person's perception. Every individual is affected by the atmospheric grid, but not everybody is affected in the same way. Depending on a passenger's personal context, the dynamic structure of the grid with its dimensions varies, which is why different atmospheric experiences are possible. The situational framing, including, for example, the materiality of the cruise ship, the design and the arrangement of its elements and its architecture, influences the atmosphere a person experience on the basis of the atmospheric grid.

Through our analysis we were able to identify the following five atmospheric dimensions on cruise ships: movement, disappearance, reflection, simulation and guidance. The dimension 'movement' pervades the passenger and influences his lived body in countless ways anytime and anywhere on the ship. The dimension 'disappearance' determines the guests' visual, olfactory, auditory and haptic perceptions in a synesthetic manner. The dimension 'reflection' refers to the dominance of visual perceptions such as images and reflections of the surroundings and of the self. These elements convey a feeling of a cinematic experience and a cinematic presence of the self that highly influences the individual's perception of all present and past experiences. The dimension 'simulation' sparks the feeling of an inversion of everyday reality, as most activities and experiences on the ship seem to have no immediate consequences for the individual's everyday life back home. Finally, the dimension 'guidance' leads to the impression of not being able to 'shake off' the location's conditions. These analytically recognised atmospheric dimensions on cruise ships overlap and constitute the atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas. The grid is perceived individually by each passenger as a holistic atmospheric entity.

### *The Basic and Comprehensive Atmospheric Dimension 'Movement'*

The complex interaction of water, ship technology and control mechanisms create a dynamic movement in all three spatial directions causing that the cruise ship is always on the move. Waves, convulsions and vibrations of the engines, the

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1. [http://www.proarq.fau.ufrj.br/revista/public/docs/Proarq18\\_TheCity\\_JeanThibaud.pdf](http://www.proarq.fau.ufrj.br/revista/public/docs/Proarq18_TheCity_JeanThibaud.pdf)

propellers and manoeuvres further add to these movements. The passengers' challenge consists in the permanent interaction of the own body and the dynamic movements of the ship – they cannot escape the constant droning that becomes a perpetual synesthetic reference. Additionally, the movements of the passengers themselves like embarking, climbing stairs, walking, dancing and playing are subjected to the act of 'being moved': 'At sea, a room's floor feels somehow 3D, and your footing demands a slight attention that good old static land never needs' (Wallace, 1997, 283). The vertical level of movement can be experienced in its extreme through the upward and downward of the elevators.

The dimension 'movement' manifests itself in the following four specific dynamics of movement. As the passenger is located on the ship, he is more or less exposed to all of those movements – he is moved by them and cannot escape them.

I. The dynamics of water: The sea itself is permanently moving. Physical processes associated with the constitution of the earth's surface and the physical atmosphere generate ocean currents, winds, waves and tides. The movement of water is a fundamental impulse for the dimension 'movement'. As soon as a person is situated on a ship, he can feel the dynamics of water. A floating ship is exposed to an omnipresent movement that can neither be fully controlled nor stopped. 'Every (lived) body' and 'every thing' on board is unavoidably and unconsciously exposed to this kind of movement. All other three dynamics of movement and also the other four dimensions of the atmospheric grid are complying with this dominant form of movement. Therefore we argue that this atmospheric dimension of movement should be considered as the decisive dimension of the atmospheric grid of cruising at sea.

II. The dynamics of ship technology: The ship is moved by the natural movement of water, but it is only due to the ship technology that a controlled locomotion of the ship on water can take place. Engines, screws, and other mechanic elements induce the ships own distinct style of movement. Built-in stabilisers can further maintain the movement. The ship technology makes the hull vibrate and ultimately leads to a directed and targeted navigation of the ship.

III. The dynamics of control: The vessels' movements are closely related to the dynamics of ship technology. These movements are made possible by those responsible for the control of technology. Not only the captain and his officers, who decide on manoeuvres and run these, but also the navigation rules form an indispensable framework for shipping on the open sea. All ship movements that are executed by the bridge – back and forth, rolling and pitching – are happening simultaneously with or against the previously mentioned dimensions of movement. The way in which the ship – and with that 'every (lived) body' and 'every thing' on it – is moved highly depends on the captains' experience and abilities.

IV. The passengers' dynamics: The passengers' movements on board – both the physical movement of their material bodies and the movement they are experiencing through the lived body – are directly related to the fact that the ship is moving on and in the water. Those movements of the passenger are caused by the vessel's infrastructure, its materiality, and its architecture. The passenger moves across the

ship horizontally, from starboard to port and back, he uses stairs and lifts for vertical movement through the various. He visits the different places the ship has to offer and thereby participates in all kinds of events and activities onboard that move him and make him move. These dimensions of movement have a direct effect on the passenger: a human being physically reacts to the ships movements with compensatory movements. This dynamic is even maintained temporarily when the passenger leaves the ship and moves ashore.

Atmospheres are limited in time and space, but they also overlap and their sensation is essentially and dynamically contextual. With regard to the cruise ship, this implies that manoeuvres and weather changes can have a major impact on the subjective feelings. Since the individual tolerance of this kind of motion varies, it can lead to seasickness as one example.

### *Conclusion*

'Being moved' and 'moving' constitute the background of the cruise ship's comprehensive atmospheric dimension of 'movement' as an integral part of the atmospheric grid. This atmospheric dimension occurs on every ship and affects passengers and crew. Movement contributes to the passenger's sense of disconcertment, since he/she can only somewhat anticipate or foresee how he/she will move or will be moved. This feeling even persists during shore excursions<sup>2</sup> when passengers continue to be influenced by their previous efforts to cope with the movements on the ship. Passengers thus experience a major shift in their relation to the world.

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2. The term 'sailor's gait' can be attributed to the swaying of a sailboat, which sailors compensate for with their wide-based gait. They continue this manner of walking on land, and people have the impression that sailors sway when they walk.

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## Authors

Dr. Anton Escher is professor for cultural geography at the University of Mainz. He is Managing Director of the Institute of Geography and Director of the Center for Intercultural Studies (ZIS). His research focuses are on North Africa and the Middle East as well as in the fields of migration, historic towns in the Arab world and film geography.

Dipl.-Geogr. Marie Karner is a research assistant at the Institute of Geography at the University of Mainz. In her PhD thesis she deals with Lebanese Diasporic Village Communities. Migration and diaspora are the main subjects of her research. She is interested in the dynamics and practices of global communities and translocal lives.

Christina Kerz is a research assistant at the Institute of Geography at the University of Mainz. Her main research interests address topics in social and urban geography with a focus on heritage, tourism and feelings. In her PhD thesis she explored the relationship between atmospheres and authenticity as constructed and perceived in Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, USA.

Dipl.-Geogr. Helena Rapp is a research assistant at the Institute of Geography at the University of Mainz. In her PhD thesis she deals with intercultural strategies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century using the example of cultural brokerage. Cultural and social geography are the main subjects of her research. She is interested in transformations of cultural phenomena and society, tourism and art.

Dipl.-Geogr. Elisabeth Sommerlad is a research assistant at the Institute of Geography at the University of Mainz. In her PhD-thesis she deals with diversity-based interactions in Hollywood movies. Film, media, cultural and social geography are the main subjects of her research. She is interested in the depiction of cities, societies, and culture in media.